

# TAPES NEWSLETTER

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE  
PERSCOM EVALUATION SYSTEMS OFFICE  
VOL.3 NO.1

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SHARE THIS WITH ALL YOUR  
ACTIVITIES. THEY WANT THE  
INFORMATION!!!

**"BUILDING COHESION"**

Beginning with this issue and for the coming months we will start sharing feedback based on the first TAPES rating cycles as they end; 30 June 1994 for grades 13 and above and 31 October 1994 for grades 9-12. We've asked the MACOM representatives and are soliciting our readers to keep providing us with information on how the system is working. Later during FY 95, many of you will have the opportunity to participate in the Armywide survey on civilian personnel management. As part of that survey, there will be questions on TAPES. Feedback from that survey will appear in a future edition of this newsletter. Meanwhile, we invite you to provide us with your comments on the system by completing the last page of this newsletter.

#### TAPES - THE VIDEO

By now all of the Army's operating Civilian Personnel Offices and MACOM Civilian Personnel Directorate staff offices should have received a copy of the TAPES video. In 43 minutes we cover both systems. The video features several vignettes which show an initial and midpoint counseling session for a Base System Ratee during which Values are discussed. In the Senior System, a Ratee is shown developing his performance plan (Support Form) and then discussing it with his Rater. If additional copies are required, consult your local activity audio-visual services POC. We encourage CPOs to loan this video to their serviced activities.

#### TAPES USER PAMPHLET

DA Pamphlet 690-400 was designed to give easy step-by-step instructions on how to complete the TAPES forms and how the system works. While it can't speak to every individual situation, it does cover the basic requirements of the system. Many

have reported that it tells them all they need to know to handle routine questions. If you are a Rater without your own personal copy of the pamphlet, contact your CPO. If you are a Ratee, ask your Rater to loan you a copy.

#### PERIOD COVERED vs. RATED MONTHS

Period covered/rating period refer to the Armywide rating cycle dates for the Senior System Ratees (e.g. 1 Jul-30 Jun or 1 Nov-31 Oct) and the dates established locally to annually evaluate Base System Ratees. These dates would only be adjusted if the Ratee entered the cycle late or when an early annual is prepared because the Ratee or Rater departed 120 days or less before the cycle ended. Rated months refers to the period the Ratee was under an approved performance plan. This figure would usually be 12 months but not less than 4 months (120 days--the minimum rating period). Rating period dates should not be adjusted to coincide with the date the performance plan was signed.

**BASE SYSTEM PERFORMANCE AWARDS**

Nonsupervisory Base System Ratees rated Successful Level 3 (Fully Successful) continue to be eligible for Performance Awards under TAPES. A modification to the Incentive Awards Regulation, AR 672-20 was made via message Date Time Group P 021755Z Sep 94. The message was sent to all MACOM and activity CPOs.

**ON SITE VISITS**

Representatives from the TAPES Project Office will start to visit MACOM selected sites. During these assistance visits, we will review representative samplings of Evaluation Reports and be available to respond to questions on the system.

**THE INTERMEDIATE RATER**

This is an optional position and

may occur when there is a level of supervision between the Rater and Senior Rater. An Intermediate Rater's primary role is to review/recommend approval of performance plans and to review appraisals/seek resolution when disagreements arise. Intermediate Raters are required to complete their part of an Evaluation Report with comments on the general performance of the Ratee.

**EVALUATION REPORT + SUPPORT FORM**

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requires that a performance appraisal and the plan upon which it was based be filed together in an employees Official Personnel Folder (OPF) or Employee Performance File (EPF) maintained in the CPO. If the Evaluation Report you send to CPO does not have the performance plan attached, it is incomplete and should be returned.

**DON'T FORGET!!**

- Read the TAPES user pamphlet (DA Pamphlet 690-400). It was designed to provide step-by-step instructions on the system.
- The rating cycle for grades 9-12 ends on 31 October 1994. To be considered timely, an Evaluation Report with the performance plan (Support Form) attached must be received in the CPO within 45 days of the end of the rating period.
- A performance plan must be in effect for at least 120 days (based on the date the Senior Rater initialled) before an Evaluation Report may be completed.
- Rater and Senior Rater box checks on an Evaluation Report must be in agreement.
- Ratees must not be informed of their performance rating until after the Senior Rater has approved the Evaluation Report.

- Civilians are rated on performance only, not potential.
- Document performance award nominations/approvals on a copy of page 1 of the Evaluation Report. No awards information on the original.
- Each rated objective must be annotated with the appropriate objective rating, i.e. (E) - Excellence, (S) - Success, (NI) - (Needs Improvement or (F) - Fails.
- ~~- The Senior Rater Profile can only be done after ALL ratings for a grade level (e.g. GS-9) have been completed.~~
- ~~- The Senior Rater profile must be completed on all but early annual ratings.~~
- Evaluation Reports may not be extended by additional pages.
- Raters should use no more than two lines to address Values and bullet examples of accomplishments.
- The TAPES HOT LINE (DSN 221-8009/COM (703) 325-8009) is operational to respond to any questions which could not be resolved at the local level.

#### EXPERIENCES FROM THE FIELD

##### TAPES POSITIVES

- TAPES allows supervisors to establish major performance objectives that have direct relationship to the work to be performed.
- Ratees development of performance objectives and documentation of accomplishments keeps them involved.
- Values are a plus; allow recognition of the Ratee's "extra" effort.
- Amount of writing needed to complete the evaluation is reduced. This saves the Rater time.
- Having a place to document counseling sessions helps ensure counseling occurs.
- Like "50% rule" - encourages Ratees to take risks and try things that may or may not work.

##### CONCERNS WITH THE SYSTEM

- Senior Rater Profile appears useless.

- Most Ratees will get excellence over 50%, system will inflate.
- Military dislike requirement for Rater/Senior Rater agreement.

(Refer to the Q&A Section for a response to these issues)

**MOST COMMON ERRORS ON A TAPES EVALUATION REPORT  
(MUST BE RETURNED BY THE CPO)**

- Rater and Senior Rater box checks not in agreement, e.g. Rater checks Excellence Over 50% in Part IVa and Senior Rater checks Overall Performance Rating of Successful Level 2 in Part VIIa.
- Failure to annotate objective ratings on the performance plan (Use the annotations shown under "Don't Forget").
- Failure to attach the performance plan to the Evaluation Report.
- Failure to complete Senior Rater Profile and/or Profile incorrectly completed (e.g. "X" in box instead of a number).
- Performance Plan not in effect 120 days.
- Senior Rater failure to initial and date performance plan.
- No specific objectives for Organizational Management/Leadership or Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action (EEO/AA) for supervisory/managerial positions.

**EXAMPLES FROM EVALUATION REPORTS**

**VALUES/Section V:**

- Places organizational goals above personal convenience.
- Never hides problems or issues, solves them.
- Accomplishes results without creating friction.
- Total dedication and commitment to the organization and the Army.
- Takes action to get work done without worrying about who dropped the ball.
- Loyalty and integrity unmatched. Merits highest confidence.
- Spotless integrity; puts herself second, behind mission and welfare of subordinates.
- Expertise is sought after by the field, HQDA, and other agencies.
- Accepts each task with positive and cooperative spirit.
- Ensures the system functions. Is not afraid to take chances in support of complex problems.

**BULLET EXAMPLES/Section VIb**

- Obtained DCSOPS approval to include TAC actions in Leader Development

Action Plan despite initial reservations.

- Excelled as student at Army Management Staff College by exceeding course standards and graduating in top 20%.
- Reduced DMDC Master File errors from 1,699,27 in Jan 94 to 392,100 in Apr 94.
- Supported EEO/AA through a totally balanced and integrated workforce.
- Fantastic relationship with subordinates and counterparts; workforce participation is outstanding.
- Voluntarily took on additional work in support of the formal technical test (SQT) of functional software capabilities.
- Used team building techniques to promote open communication. Reduced conflict within the division.
- Deftly handled several extremely sensitive cases; avoided potential embarrassment for the command.
- Meticulously managed the Division property account for one year resulting in 100% accountability upon final inventory.
- In forefront of the Agency recruiting efforts, dramatically improved the numbers and quality of Agency recruits.

BULLET COMMENTS (Performance/Potential)/Section VIIIB

- Model team player who is more concerned with positive results than individual recognition.
- As graduate of the Army Management Staff College (AMSC) will be key to future success of the organization.
- Innovative, hard-charging.
- Must select for senior executive internship or US Army War College.
- Displayed excellent mentoring skills in his dealings with junior employees.
- Knows the Federal Acquisition Regulation and applied knowledge to benefit organization.
- Take charge attitude, successfully adapted employees to a new organizational structure.
- Strong potential for progressively more responsible assignments.
- Tireless leader who consistently gives the extra effort in responding to my challenge.
- Fully qualified and able to make greater contributions in positions of increased responsibility.

? ? ? ? ? QUESTIONS FROM THE FIELD ? ? ? ? ?

Q: Of what value is the Senior Rater Profile?

A: Limited for now since it only reflects the current rating period. Anyone viewing the profile will see where the rating stands in relationship to other ratings given at the same grade level. The profile offers additional information to be considered along with the rest of the information found on an Evaluation Report, i.e. performance objectives and specific accomplishments to justify the rating. Rating

officials may want to use the profile to help determine the distribution of performance awards. As TAPES ratings become more common and they are used in making hiring and other personnel decisions, the usefulness of the profile will increase, especially in protecting those with harder/tougher raters.

Q: Why have a Profile when it's of limited use?

A: To introduce the concept and be in a position to expand on its use as additional flexibilities are granted in law and regulation.

Q: Will the TAPES formulas lead to more inflated ratings?

A: As long as ratings are tied directly to performance awards and RIF points, rating officials will continue to consider the effect of their ratings on the Ratee. However, with TAPES our primary objective is to minimize the differences between military and civilian evaluation systems by building a common bond of shared values and performance expectations that effectively meet the mission. To that end, TAPES emphasizes the importance of communication and encourages the development of challenging performance expectations all of which may not be exceeded. It's possible now to recognize degrees of top level performance without penalizing the Ratee by lowering the rating.

Q: Must the Senior Rater's box check in Part VIIIA of the Senior System Evaluation Report match the Rater's box check in Part VIA?

A: Yes, if the Senior Rater agrees with the Rater's box check. If the Senior Rater disagrees with the Rater's box check and the two can't reach mutual agreement, the Senior Rater has the authority to change the Rater's box check.

Q: Why can't civilians be rated like the military where the Rater and Senior Rater don't have to agree?

A: The military evaluation systems are not governed by the same laws and regulations governing the civilian system. Military members are rated primarily on performance by the Rater and primarily on potential by the Senior Rater. This allows for two different and independent viewpoints on the Ratee.

Under OPM regulations, civilians may only be rated on performance. Each performance element (called objective in TAPES) must be rated and a formula applied to determine the overall performance rating level. OPM requires that performance ratings be reviewed and approved by an official (Senior Rater) higher than the Rater (Commander/equivalent position excepted). Since civilians can only be rated on performance, Senior Raters must decide whether they agree or disagree with the performance rating recommended by the Rater. When disagreements on the Ratee's performance cannot be resolved by mutual agreement, it's the Senior Rater who has the final authority, even if it means directing the Rater to change or making the change(s) themselves to objective ratings (and bullet examples if necessary).

Q: How are changes to the rating made on Evaluation Reports? What about objective ratings on the performance plan?

A: A clean report should be prepared. The Evaluation Report the Ratee receives should reflect a united management position. The best way to avoid "messy" changes to the rated objectives on the plan is to pencil in the objective rating and leave them as such until the final decision is made.

Q: Are deviations from the TAPES rating formulas allowed?

A: No. We believe the rating formulas offer enough flexibility for Raters to determine the Ratee's appropriate performance level without having to write additional supporting information to be sent forward for final decision by an official outside of the Ratee's normal rating chain (as required under the old deviation process).

Q: Do supervisors/management officials have to have specific objectives for Organizational Management/Leadership and Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EEO/AA)?

A: Yes.

Q: What is the purpose of the Yes/No boxes in Part VIa of the Evaluation Report?

A: One box or the other **must be checked** if the Ratee is a supervisor or manager. It indicates whether or not the Ratee received an Excellence in Organizational Management/Leadership or Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action (EEO/AA) (or both). If the box check is "NO", these supervisors/managers cannot receive an Overall Performance Rating above Successful Level 3.

Q: It's the end of the rating period and the performance plan of a supervisor/manager did not identify specific objectives for Organizational Management/Leadership or EEO/AA. What must happen?

A: Amend the plan with these objectives and evaluate the Ratee after 120 days. OR -- If the Rating Chain and the Ratee agree that while the plan did not contain these objectives, expectations in these two critical areas were understood, then annotate the plan with the objectives and a statement that they were understood. There is no need to extend the rating period. **MAKE SURE THE NEW PERFORMANCE PLAN CONTAINS SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES IN BOTH THESE AREAS.**

Q: Are Special Ratings for Acceptable Level of Competence (ALOC) determinations entered into the Automated Civilian Personnel System (ACPERS)?

A: Yes; however, after serving their purpose, they must be removed.

Q: What is the minimum period one must be in place before serving as a Senior Rater?

A: There is none. Newly assigned Senior Raters have to rely heavily on a Rater's input. (In this situation, it would be helpful for the Rater to furnish suggested comments for the Senior Rater's portion of the



Evaluation Report.)

Q: Does the 45 days to get ratings to the CPO consider the time it takes for Senior Raters to complete their portion?

A: Yes.

Q: What can Raters do to reduce anxiety/workload at the end of the rating period?

A: Start formulating the shell of an Evaluation Report early (suggest from the midpoint on).

Q: Should the performance plan be reviewed when a new Rater or Senior Rater reports in?

A: Yes and the change in the rating chain reflected on the performance plan.

\*\*\*\*\* GOOD IDEAS \*\*\*\*\*

Personnelists at Fort Lewis, Washington, advise that the TAPES user pamphlet be read before seeing the TAPES video in order to have a good frame of reference.

At the US Army Natick Research, Development, and Engineering Center in Massachusetts, a pamphlet was developed to provide the workforce information on Values and the requirements of TAPES.

Personnelists at William Beaumont Hospital in Texas made sure the TAPES video was available for employees who worked the 2nd and 3rd shifts so they too could receive the information.

The TAPES Program Manager at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, is conducting a survey on TAPES.

Several installations are using their closed circuit capability to show the TAPES video.

If we missed out on printing your GOOD IDEA, please let us know and we'll share it in the next Update.

# MILITARY/CIVILIAN DIFFERENCE

## IAPES Senior System

- o Semiannual counseling
- o Support Form filed w/report
- o Values narrative encouraged
- o Rater rates performance only
- o Rater/Senior Rater agreement required
- o Senior Rater box check is performance only
- o Senior Rater profile completed annually

## QER

- o Periodic counseling
- o Support Form not filed
- o Values rating required
- o Rater rates perf/potential
- o No agreement required
- o Senior Rater box check is potential
- o Senior Rater profile continuously maintained

## IAPES Base System

- o Semiannual counseling
- o Values narrative encouraged
- o Checklist filed w/report
- \* o Intermediate Rater, No reviewer
- o Rater/Senior Rater agreement required
- o Senior Rater box check is performance only

## NCQ-ER

- o Quarterly counseling
- o Values rating required
- o Checklist not filed
- o No Intermediate Rater, Reviewer required
- o No agreement required
- o Senior Rater box checks-performance & potential

\* OPTIONAL

Excerpt from Commander's EEI  
(dtd Jul 93)

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

Contact the Evaluation Systems Office, PERSCOM, DSN 221-9659  
/9660 or CML (703) 325-9659/9660. FAX DSN 221-0742/  
CML (703) 325-0742.

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author(s) and are not necessarily those of the Department of  
the Army, USA PERSCOM or any other agency of the  
U.S. Government".

(FOLD AND MAIL)

WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR RESPONSE TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. The TAPES user pamphlet (DA Pamphlet 690-400) would be more helpful  
if:

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2. I would like more information on:
- A. Values in the workplace.
  - B. Writing performance objectives
  - C. Performance counseling
  - D. \_\_\_\_\_ (write in)

3. What I like about TAPES (and the reason why) is:

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4. What I would change about TAPES (and how) is:

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